

12 JAN 1972

# Tribune editor still discovering the countless joys of Paris

By Arnold Belchman

Paris

These fragrant winter mornings in Paris, Buddy Weiss keeps the windows of his Left Bank apartment bedroom wide open. It's nice, he says, to wake to the somber Gregorian chants floating up from the Abbe Gregoire which adjoins the garden of his 200-year-old house on the Rue du Cherche Midi.

In winter, bells for matins at the monastery sound early. This used to bother Mr. Weiss because, as editor of the International Herald Tribune (probably the most expensive daily newspaper in the world — 20 cents in Paris, 50 cents in New Delhi), he keeps late hours and is rarely abed before 3 a.m.

"It doesn't bother me anymore," he told me, "because I began to find some consolation thinking about those poor monks next door walking around on a stone-cold floor, freezing, and me lying in a warm bed. After a while I began to sleep even better because it's a kind of pleasant sound after New York."

## Career in journalism

Murray M. Weiss (Buddy is his nickname) is a true New Yorker. Born 48 years ago in Rockaway, he studied at New York University and Columbia where he did graduate work in English. From there he began to work on newspapers.

When the New York Herald Tribune folded in the fall of 1966, Mr. Weiss had been its managing editor for five years. With the Trib gone, John (Jock) Whitney, the owner of the International Herald Tribune, suggested to Kay Graham, Washington Post publisher and an IHT co-owner, that Mr. Weiss run the Paris-based daily. Mr. Weiss was then assistant to the publisher of the Boston Herald Traveler. So from Boston he flew off with his wife and children to la gaité parisienne.

The IHT is the primary source of news for Americans (or Canadians) who do not speak or read the language of the country in which they live. It is also an important source of news about America for those Europeans (particularly the business and government communities) who can read English, and who find that their own national press offers meager and frequently ill-informed coverage about America.

## American news carried

"With such a multicultural audience," said Mr. Weiss, "we can decide what we're going to publish on a much different standard than might be the case if we were publishing in New York. We can assume that our readers are among the best-educated and best-informed. Therefore we can publish, and do, more American and international news than 95 percent of

"Our news policy must be different from that of a newspaper published in America or, say, Britain. Even the most internationally minded newspaper will usually lead its page with a local story — a subway-fare increase, a public-school riot, a work-to-rule slowdown on suburban trains outside London.

"None of these, no local story is of interest to our readership. We have to find our identity in different ways."

So Mr. Weiss and a handful of other Americans are working in Paris and loving it without feeling that they are expatriates.

## Lots of time at noon

Mr. Weiss is no transfigured seeker after truth like the literary exiles of the 1920's and 1930's, no emigre from American philistinism. What he and his staff members have discovered are the joys of Paris, still one of the most exciting and delightful cities to visit or inhabit. And then, of course, there are those two-hour lunches.

The long lunches are not mere social occasions. They stem from the overriding fact that the IHT is a morning paper trapped by its news sources which are also its co-owners, the New York Times and Washington Post, plus the six-hour time difference between Paris and the East Coast of the United States. Thus, at the lunch hour, Mr. Weiss has plenty of time. At the normal Parisian dinner hour, though, eight or half-past eight, he is closing the usual 16 pages for the next day's edition.

His working day is normally over by one in the morning.

Another reason for the long lunches is that the IHT is very much a part of the scene here and has been since 1887, when it started publication as the European edition of James Gordon Bennett's New York Herald. (The IHT is the second-oldest daily in Paris. Le Figaro is the oldest.)

## Social life busier

There are many more social obligations here than in New York, because in Paris there is the American community, of which Mr. Weiss is now one of the pillars.

This unavoidable involvement with the American community occasionally makes for difficulties, because people for some reason feel that the IHT is really an adjunct of the American Embassy. There have been times when the French Foreign Office complained to the Ambassador about a story in the IHT, and the Ambassador had to explain to a skeptical Qual d'Orsay that nobody, not even an Ambassador, would dare tell a newspaper owned by Jock Whitney, Mrs. Kay Graham, and Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, publisher of the New York Times, what not to print.

Not only Frenchmen, however, occasionally get irritated with the IHT. Americans have been known to criticize the paper because it has published stories about racial disorders in American cities. All these obligations and involvements mean that Mr. Weiss puts in a lot more work-time than he ever did in New York.

## Some issues banned

But French Government officials or Americans are a minor problem compared to the political conflicts which burden the globe and which so often affect the IHT's daily circulation.

The average American, British, or French newspaper which circulates internationally earns its money from the readership in the country where it publishes. If it's banned in a foreign country, not too much revenue is lost.

It's far different for the Trib. About 85 percent of the paper's 100,000 circulation, distributed by train, truck, or plane, is spread over Europe. On any given day, there's a 50-50 possibility that it will be banned in at least one country because it has published a story displeasing to somebody on top.

One day recently, the Trib was barred from Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon, but for different stories. The paper has occasionally been barred from Spain and Yugoslavia and gone undistributed "due to technical difficulties" in the Soviet Union, Poland, and other satellite countries.

## Transportation costly

The unusual circulation pattern is responsible for the IHT being not only the costliest daily in the world but also one with the highest advertising rate. The Trib is the only international newspaper the bulk of whose circulation is not confined to a single country. Therefore transportation expenses are extremely high compared to other newspapers, particularly now that chartered planes are being used to fly it to European capitals.

For every dollar spent on newsprint, two dollars go to transport the paper out of Paris.

The technical operation of the paper has unusual cultural aspects. The \$2 million annual payroll covers some 300 people, 40 percent in the mechanical trades and 60 percent in the editorial, advertising, and circulation.

The printers, all French citizens, are specialists in Franglais — jumez l'histoire a la page 3; faire un deadline; donne-moi le byline; est-ce qu'on kill cette histoire?

It's a whole other world into which Mr. Weiss has moved — quite happily.